The Builder.

No. CCCCLV.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1851.

IT was a capital thought on the part of the *British Archæological Association* which led them to determine on visiting the antiquities of London City. The first meeting there was held on Friday, the 17th inst., and the Exchequer Court in Guildhall,—kindly placed at their disposal by the Corporation, who, moreover, afforded all other facilities in their power,—was crowded with visitors at half-past one o'clock in the day to open the proceedings. It is a noticeable occurrence, in a quarter where, rightly or wrongly, we have been led to believe the preservation of antiquities has been little cared for. Nearly 200 persons must have taken part in the proceedings during the day and evening, amongst whom we may mention Mr. Pettigrew (who presided), Sir Henry Dillon, Mr. Planché, Mr. Bunning, Mr. Gould, Mr. Saunders (comptroller), Mr. Wansey, Mr. Richard Taylor, Mr. Lott, Mr. Griffith, Mr. W. P. Griffith, Mr. G. R. Corner, Mon. C. Daly, Mr. G. Gwilt, Mr. Newton, Mr. White, Mr. Baily, Mr. Waterlow, Mr. Duesbury, Mr. Haywood (sewers' surveyor), Mr. Tress, Mr. Oliver, Dr. Pettigrew, Mr. Saul, Mr. Haggard, Mr. John Webb, Mr. G. Wright, Mr. Solly, Mr. Godwin, Mr. W. Calder Marshall, and many others whose names we cannot at the moment recall. There was a fair sprinkling, too, of pretty faces under bonnets, without any claims to antiquity. To point out how much there was to see in the City, Mr. White read a classified list of the various objects of interest remaining; and then Mr. Brewer, of the City of London School, communicated an interesting account of the Guildhall, which we have printed in full. A paper by Mr. Lott, on some of the crypts in the City, and a history of Bow Church by Mr. Baily followed, and then the party proceeded to examine for themselves the hall, crypt, library, and other parts of the building they were in, first glancing at M. Alaux's large picture of the corporation and King Louis Philippe which hangs in the Exchequer Court. Chantrey's early statue of George III., Copley's picture of the siege of Gibraltar, Beechey's portrait of John Boydell (all in the Council Chamber), the commenced museum of antiquities in the library, the collection of early plays, and Shakspeare's signature* excited interest. In this last-named room, too, the library, is a picture standing against the wall, passed over by most visitors, representing the Joiners' Company (incorporated in the reign of Elizabeth as "the Faculty of Joiners and Cielers of London"), consulting with their architect on his plans for a new hall after the Great Fire of 1666. This picture, which deserves to be cleaned and examined, belongs, if we understand rightly, to the Joiners' Company, and was placed here some time ago for preservation. In the Record Office is a grant as early as the reign of William the Conqueror.

* The corporation gave 167*l.* for this.

As we give Mr. Brewer's paper, we need not stop to say anything of the building, further than to urge the Corporation, as we have often done before, to put a proper roof to their noble hall.

Bow Church was the first place visited, more particularly on account of the crypt, though the tower,—Wren's master-piece in steeple-building,—did not escape examination. The doorways in this are very clever. The peristyle on the top of the tower, the care with which the changes of form, from round to circular, are softened into each other, are noticeable points. The history of this church is a strange one. As the writer has elsewhere remarked, — if not originally a Roman temple, as was generally believed, it was one of the earliest churches built by our Norman conquerors: it has been destroyed by storm and fire; was at one time garrisoned and besieged; and was afterwards the scene of an assassination.*

We first find mention of it as a Christian church, in the reign of William the Conqueror. Stow says, it was the first in the city built on arches of stone, and that it was therefore called St. Mary *de Arcubus*, or the Bow; although he elsewhere says, that it took its name from certain stone arches, supporting a lantern on the top of the tower.† In the twelfth century, a tumult of a serious nature occurred in the City, which led to the assault upon the church before alluded to. The ring-leader, was William Fitz-Osbert, surnamed Long-beard, an individual of loose morals, who apparently possessed great talents, and was almost worshipped by the lower orders, on account of his exertions as a professed advocate for the poor, against the oppressions of the rich. An attempt being made to seize him, he took refuge in Bow steeple, together with various followers, and being well provided with ammunition and provisions, was able, for a long time, to defy the authorities. In order to drive him out, the steeple was fired. This had the desired effect; the rioters were made prisoners, and after a hasty trial, were hanged.

In 1271, part of the steeple, which had probably been much injured during the attack on Fitz-Osbert, fell down, and caused the death of several persons. It seems, however, to have been repaired soon afterwards; for in 1284, we find that one Ducket, a goldsmith, who had seriously wounded a person named Ralph Crepin (under what circumstances is not mentioned), took refuge in this church, and slept in the steeple. While there, certain friends of Crepin entered during the night, and violating the sanctuary, first slew him, and then so placed the body as to induce the belief that he had committed suicide. A verdict to this effect was accordingly returned at the inquisition, and the body was interred with customary indignities. The real circumstances, however, being afterwards discovered through the evidence of a boy, who it appears was with Ducket in his voluntary confinement, the murderers, amongst whom was a woman, were apprehended and executed. On this occurrence, the church was interdicted for a time, and the doors and windows were stopped up with brambles.

After the fire the present edifice was commenced by Wren. On digging out the ground he found what he strangely enough considered the walls of a temple of Roman workmanship under the level of the present street. In reality, however (unless other remains were found below those now to be seen, which is not probable), this was nothing more than the crypt of the ancient Norman church, and may still be examined in the vaults of the present building; for, as the account informs us, upon these walls he commenced his new church.* The former building stood about 40 feet backwards from Cheapside; and in order to bring the new steeple forward to the line of the street, the site of one house not yet rebuilt was purchased, and on it the excavations were commenced for the foundation of the tower. Here, to his great surprise, after digging down to the depth of 16 feet, he reached a Roman causeway, made of bricks and rubble, firmly cemented, which, it is supposed, formed at the time it was constructed the northern boundary of the colony; and upon this he resolved to lay the foundation for the tower. This was done in 1671, and the whole of the works appear to have been completed in the year 1680.

The crypt, which belongs apparently to the end of the eleventh century, is now filled with coffins of all ages and sizes piled one upon the other, which have doubtless contributed in silence their share of disease and premature death to the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. In 1849 we gave a view of part of this crypt with its fearful furniture,† which we have reason to know had its effect in rousing the public to a sense of their guilty folly in permitting intramural interments. How much longer such madness is to be permitted we know not. We repeat our denunciation of the system, and in spite of the anger of our friend the Vestry Clerk, would urge with respect to Bow Church, that the bodies should be immediately removed to consecrated ground, and any fresh deposits there be strictly prohibited. The crypt is ventilated, the coffins are put in fair order, and we would carefully avoid attaching blame to any individuals connected with this charnel-house, which is far from being as bad as many others. It is against the system which we protest,—a system foul and murderous,—a system of which we are unable to speak with calmness or propriety.‡

At Messrs. Groucock's, in Bow-churchyard, there is a small portion of a crypt or undercroft, which some of the party examined, and then all went to the church of St. Mary Aldermary, in Bow-lane.

If Stow be correct, when he says that this church was called *Alder*mary, because it was older than any other church dedicated to St. Mary in the City, it must have been founded at a very remote time, inasmuch as St. Mary-

* "Churches of London." Vol. II.

† The Court of Arches was formerly held in this church, and has its name from the circumstance. If Stow were not so precise, it might be suggested, from the occurrence of the French article *le*, that St. Mary *Le Bow* was the original appellation.

* It is difficult to understand how Wren, who appears to have been well acquainted with what was then called Saxon architecture, was led to the belief that these remains were of Roman workmanship; unless, as was pointed out by Mr. Gwilt in an admirable description of the crypt (*Vetusta Monumenta*, vol. v. plates 61 to 66), he was deceived by the fact that a number of Roman bricks are used in the construction of the arches. Did he mean merely that they were *More Romano*, or in the Roman manner?

† Vol. VII. p. 414.

‡ The Board of Health have recently published their "Minutes relating to the Metropolitan Interments Act since August, 1850," and the correspondence relative to the purchase of cemeteries and Abbey Wood estate. From this it appears that the separation for the latter has been abandoned, and that matters, so far as the public are concerned, are exactly where they were! Mr. Fennoak has made his award as to the compensation to be paid for the Brompton Cemetery and the Nunhead Cemetery, and we will recur to it next week.